

THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

MADERA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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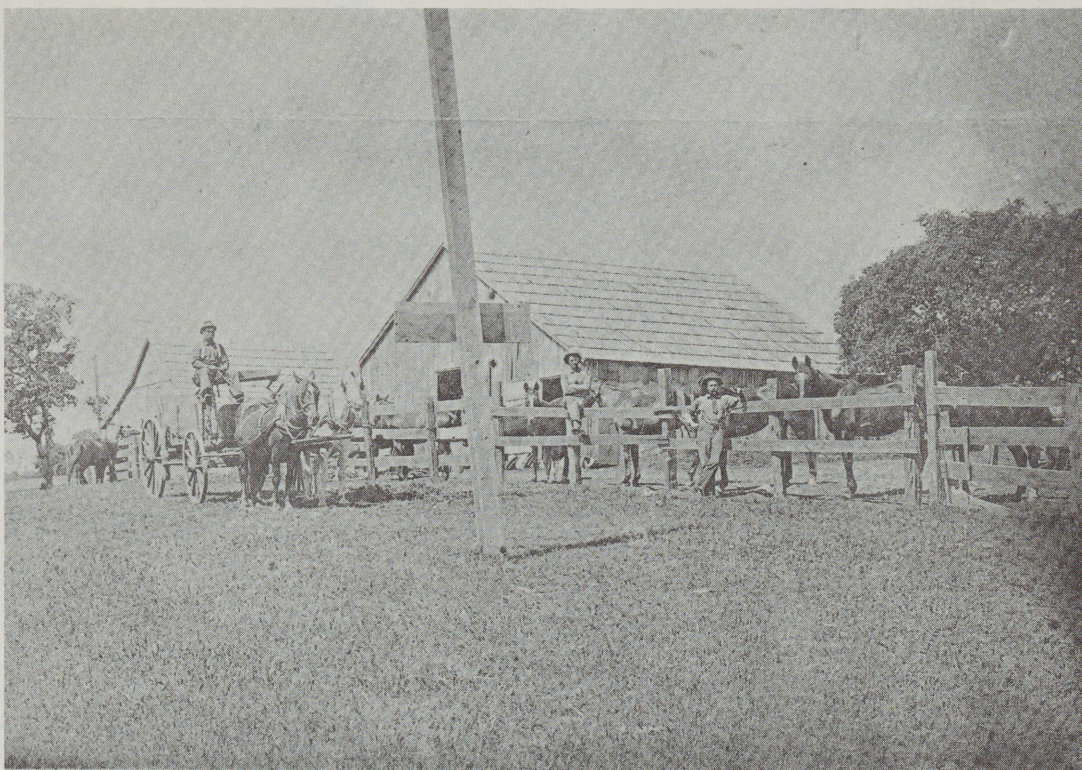


The Summit House. Note the big tree, the traveling photographer's wagon, and the other wagon and team. Man at fence was Carl Davis, Mr. Footman next, Mrs. Footman, and man seated, Virgil Koontz.

THE SUMMIT HOUSE (Dapello Ranch)

Many of the landmarks of Madera County have disappeared and many will soon be forgotten as the wheels of progress turn to the new and the modern. We know that to understand and appreciate our present way of life we must have a knowledge of our past achievements and failures.

We have chosen for this Historian, our last for 1967, the story of Summit House. This landmark is located about eight miles northeast of Raymond. It was the first of five stops by stage, in the early days on the way into Yosemite Valley.



The Barns, across the road from the Summit House.
Mr. Footman is on the wagon.

The Summit House was known in the early days as the Dapello Ranch, owned by David Dapello in the late 1800's. (We were unable to get a background on David Dapello.) It was a roadside inn at that time. The House, built about 1890, consisted of four rooms. Later, in 1901, when it was purchased by William Footman, Sr., four more rooms were added. Alice Footman Koontz states that an extra bedroom was added for the teacher, who generally boarded there. 320 acres were included in the purchase of the ranch.

If the rooms in that old house could speak, what tales they could tell!

The Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Company ran a stage from Raymond to Wawona and Summit House was the first stop after leaving Raymond. Summit House probably acquired its name due to the uphill climb until the House was reached. While the hostlers changed horses, the passengers got out and went into the House for a cool, refreshing drink in the refreshment room, a combination bar and resting place.

The Footman children recall that in 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt stopped enroute to Yosemite. Imagine the thrill that created! Everyone wanted to drink out of the glass that the President drank from. It created so much interest that the Footmans put it on display in the refreshment room. Early Madera County residents tell about Roosevelt's visits along the way before he reached Summit House. He spoke in Berenda and in Raymond, on the steps of the Bowen Hotel.

Stages stopped on the way into Yosemite and others stopped on their way back. About 25 to 30 horses were kept at the Summit House Ranch. The feed for these horses was brought up by train to Raymond and hauled by wagon and team to the House. There were two barns across the road from the Summit House. Horses and feed were kept in them. The barns were torn down in 1956.

Many teamsters hauling freight from Raymond, stopped at the House on their way to Yosemite. Meals were served to the teamsters at 25¢ each, later raised to 35¢. The horses were fed and cared for and if it was too late



William Footman Senior

for the teamsters to go on, they would get out their bed rolls and spend the night.

Several of the family remember the United States soldiers coming by, from San Francisco on their way to Yosemite Valley, where they were stationed each year to maintain law and order in the Park. They stayed all night in Raymond and then made their slow journey on into Wawona by horseback and mule team. They camped at Wawona and today this same area is a campground for tourists. The headquarters building of the army has been restored and is a part of the Pioneer Village in Wawona.

Christina Watt remembers a rather amusing incident which would have meaning to any old timers who owned cars when they first came into use. A car was stalled near the Summit House and the driver could not get any farther without some help. Someone at the House rode a horse hitched to the car and managed to get the car over the hump and continued along with the car, pulling it up any grade until they finally reached Grub Gulch. From Grub Gulch Hill the car could almost coast into Ahwahnee.



Jane Mann Footman

We cannot write about the Summit House without telling about the old oak tree in the middle of the road in front of the House. It was a tall, well shaped tree, spreading its arms out in all directions to cast a welcome shade to all who passed by. Under this old tree the blacksmiths would come at least once a month to shoe the horses that belonged to the Stage Company.

County election posters of candidates running for office were posted on this tree. We can imagine the conversations that were held under the tree as people would read the posters and praise or condemn the various qualifications of the office seekers named on the posters.

The age of the tree is not known but as long as the Dapello Ranch or the Summit House has been known, that tree was there and continued to stand until 1964. It was cut down as it was dangerous to let it remain as it was ready to fall of its own accord. We are glad that there are pictures of the tree as it stood before the Summit House, a real landmark on the way to Yosemite.



Photo taken March 7, 1963.
Four daughters and son of the William Footmans:
Alice, Theresa, William Jr., Christina and May.

Today the Summit House stands empty and alone, guarded by a faithful old dog named Dick. (A caretaker looks after the place at present.)

To make the story of Summit House more meaningful to the readers of the Historian, the story of the people who lived there for 66 years should be told.

In 1886, William Footman, Senior and his wife (formerly Jane Mann) and their small daughter May, arrived in New York. The Footmans came from Worcestershire, England. Mr. Footman was born in a town named Tibberton, Mrs. Footman from Chadsley Corbett. They remained in Utica, New York, for two years. While in New York their second daughter was born, the late Theresa Footman Denny. In 1888 the family came to Raymond. They lived in a small house on the Pearson Ranch, about two miles northeast of Raymond, on the Coarsegold Road. This property today is owned by Mrs. Herb Buchenau. Mr. Footman was anxious to acquire land of his own and so homesteaded on land about three miles north of Raymond. There was a natural spring on this land and it was called Buckeye Spring as so much Buckeye grew near it.

Mr. Footman's mother came out to California not long after the family was settled. Mrs. John (Angelina) Footman and three children, Joseph, George, and Anna, came from England to New York and on to California. An older son Arthur had come to Raymond earlier, so now the entire family was settled in the vicinity of Raymond. The father, John Footman, passed away in England before the family left England.

Alice Footman was born on this ranch in 1890. William and Christina were born while the family lived on this ranch but at that time there were no doctors in Raymond so these two children were born in Madera. (Of interest to some will be the fact that the doctor was Dr. F. R. Brown, brother of Dr. Edgar Brown, first doctor in Madera.)

Alice says she recalls a very happy childhood on this ranch and attending the Granite School, about one and one-half miles west of the ranch. Teachers she remembers are May Elmore and Mayme Saunders Moses. The children rode donkeys to school and frequently they had difficulty in getting to school on time. Any one who has had any experience with a donkey knows that the rider

has little to say about the speed. Christina Footman Watt has a vivid recollection of being late one morning when she was just six years old. As punishment she had to write this sentence one hundred times, "I won't be late again."

While the five Footman children, May, Theresa, Alice, Christina, and William had many happy times, they also were taught to work and carry their share of work in the house and on the ranch.

Mr. Footman raised cattle on this ranch and also operated a butcher business. Mr. and Mrs. Footman had their own slaughter house and other necessary equipment to carry on the sale of meat. They delivered meat to the neighboring communities, Granite Quarries, Grub Gulch, Gambetta Mine, plus many roadside places.

How many of us today think we could follow the daily routine that Mrs. Footman followed from 1890 until 1901? She would leave the ranch, driving a horse and buckboard, so that she could be in Raymond in time to meet the train at 7:00 A.M., pick up the ice and start out on the meat delivery. She would have fresh beef, pork, and once a week she had fresh fish which came up on the train from San Francisco. Mrs. Footman delivered to the Granite Quarries, back home at noon to change horses, prepare lunch, then went on to Grub Gulch (a trip of eleven miles), then on to the Gambetta Mine. Mrs. Footman made this trip three days a week, in addition, keep in mind that she stopped along the way to deliver meat to many roadside customers. Of course when she got home the day was not finished, a meal was yet to prepare and always other household chores. Everyone was busy on that ranch, the children as they grew older naturally took their share of work along with their parents.

The sturdy, pioneer spirit of this family is evident all the way along. When we consider that these people came over here from England, having always lived in a fairly large city, a very old and well established pattern of life and then to come almost directly to a very simple, almost primitive way of living, they adjusted well to this new way of life and soon became a very definite part of the community of Raymond.

On Mrs. Footman's delivery days, when she came to the Gambetta Mine, she always received a warm welcome from the wife of the Superintendent of the mine, Sherwood Hopkins, the latter being the nephew of Mark Hopkins. Mrs. Hopkins always made tea and she and Mrs. Footman would have a pleasant visit. The Hopkins had a beautiful and well furnished home there and in later years Mrs. Hopkins gave several pieces of furniture to Mrs. Footman. Mrs. Footman also bought some when the Hopkins moved away. Some of this furniture is still in the Summit House.

There were few idle moments for Mr. and Mrs. Footman, raising cattle, supplying wood for the wood-burning engines of the log trains, hauling freight and, of course, the meat and fish delivery.

In the spring of 1901 the Footmans purchased the Summit House from David Dapello. We have described the House earlier in our story, so will continue about the Footmans and their activities. All were busy in this place, serving meals to the teamsters, waiting on the tourists and Mr. Footman continued to haul some freight from Raymond to the mountain settlements and on his return would bring a load of lumber or shakes from the Standard Lumber Company, located on the Signal Peak Road. The lumber and shakes were then shipped by train from Raymond to the valley and San Francisco. William Footman, Jr. worked with his father in the freight hauling.

Mr. Footman also raised cattle at the Summit Ranch. Their cattle brand was first 3 and then later changed to 31. Mr. Footman increased the acreage until there were at least 1400 acres.

When the tourist season was at a low ebb in the fall, the Footmans raised chickens, dressed them and sold them to the Wawona Hotel and the Miami Hotel. Christina said that they used to dress from 12 to 15 dozen chickens in one day. They furnished them twice a week! Of course the whole family helped in this project too.

The children attended a small one room school named Leland Gulch, located about a mile northeast of Summit House. Mr. and Mrs.

Footman believed in education and encouraged their children to secure the best possible education that would prepare them to take their place in the community and the world about them.

Mrs. Footman was widely known in the Raymond community and the surrounding area, as a very kind woman. She was a "refined, graceful lady," is the description one of her daughters gave to the writer.

Christina recollects the time her mother went to visit an Indian woman who was very ill. Mrs. Footman brought her home to the Summit House and cared for her until she was well enough to return home. Mrs. Footman was interested in Indian lore and their basketry skill. She used to keep a supply of Indian baskets at the Summit House and would sell them to the tourists when they stopped off on their way to Yosemite. (A few baskets that remained have been donated to the Madera County Historical Society by the Footman family.)

Mrs. Footman and her daughter Christina visited England in 1927, and saw the old home of Mrs. Footman and visited relatives of both Mr. and Mrs. Footman.

Mr. and Mrs. Footman worked side by side over the years from 1888 until they passed away at the Summit House, Mr. Footman in October, 1933, and Mrs. Footman in November, 1945. They are both at rest in the Arbor Vitae Cemetery in Madera.

We must tell you about the Footman children so that our story will be complete.

May, the oldest, is now Mrs. May Rogers and lives at present in Los Banos, however, most of her adult life was spent in Fresno. She has one daughter, Azaelia Menter.

Theresa, the second daughter, taught school, starting in 1913 at Leland Gulch School, then taught at Dennis in 1919 and 1920, and at Sweetflower until she retired in 1948. She was a splendid teacher, always concerned about the welfare of her pupils, often bringing food to some who would come to school without lunch. She

visited in their homes, ever willing to lend a helping hand. Every child was a special person to her. Many of her students, living in and around the vicinity of Madera and the mountain areas have never forgotten her inspiration and many kindnesses.

Theresa married Mr. Arthur Denney in 1935. A fine tribute is paid to Mr. Denney in the Sierra Star in the December 31, 1959, issue. Mr. Denney passed away on December 17, 1959, at the Summit House.

Theresa took over the home at Summit House after the death of her father in 1933.

After the death of Mr. Denney, Theresa continued to live at the Summit House, active in her club work, visiting her family and friends, helping as she was needed in the community. Theresa was a very interested member of the Madera County Historical Society.

Theresa passed away on Feb. 17, 1967. Theresa was the last one of the Footman family to leave the Summit House.

The third child of the William Footmans is Mrs. Alice Footman Koontz. Alice married Eldridge E. Koontz in 1914. The wedding was held at the Summit House and was a very happy occasion. Mr. Koontz owned and operated a blacksmith shop in Raymond at that time. He came from a very early pioneer family. His grandfather guided wagon trains across the plains. Mr. Koontz passed away on November 28, 1962.

Christina was married to Mr. William Watt in 1920, and has lived in Madera ever since her marriage. She has two daughters, Mrs. Elsie Winward of China Lake and Mrs. Darwin (Wilma) Shebelut who resides in Madera. Mr. Watt passed away in May, 1960.

William Junior, the youngest of the Footman children, resides in Raymond. He married Emma Harriet Jones. Bill Footman, as he is generally known, has been a cattleman from the time he was old enough, first with his father and then on his own, except for a few years when he and his son-in-law, Davis Hamill, owned and operated the Silvertip Lodge at Fish Camp. (Fish Camp has a really interesting history and some who really know it should write this for the Historian.)

Fish Camp was named by Mrs. Albert Philip in 1881 when she filed on a timber claim. In 1882 Mr. Philip built a two-story hotel at the exact spot where the Silver Tip Lodge stands today. This Lodge is well known throughout the state as both a winter and summer hotel. Some old timers say Fish Camp was also called Summerdale.

Mr. and Mrs. William Footman, Jr. had twin daughters, Marjelle and Marjorie. Mrs. Footman passed away on April 19, 1963. Emma was a well known teacher of Madera County, teaching at several mountain schools: Willow Creek, Polk, Coarsegold, and Raymond. She was active in the Women's Improvement Club, the Cow Belles, and participated in school and community activities.

This concludes the story of the Summit House and the family who lived there for 66 years.

The Historian wishes to thank Mrs. Christina Watt, Mrs. Alice Koontz, William Footman, Mrs. Gladys Hartwell, a cousin, the Sierra Star, and the Madera Lore for all the information given that enabled us to write this story.

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Requests From Our Readers

Mr. Lawrence Kidd has written in asking for information on the Kidd family. They were very early settlers.

We have had a request for a photograph of Elmer H. Cox, who played an important role in the development of the Sugar Pine Lumber Company. If anyone has one we would return it as soon as a print is made.

Mrs. A. V. Vecchiarelli has asked for information on Alfred Frederick Cannon who was around Raymond in the late 1800's. He was connected with the Vignolo family by marriage.

How did Hidden Dam get its name? This question came in from Long Beach State College. They will have a team of archeologists up there this summer to dig around the area where the dam is to be located soon. How did the name "Hidden" originate in relation to the dam?

Anyone having answers to any of the above requests please contact the Madera County Historical Society, Box 478, Madera, California.

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Our Apologies To You

We are sorry that the Historian is so late this time but we have real valid reasons. Many people are involved when a story is written. It takes time to verify dates, locations, and meeting the approval of the family that we write about.

* * * * *

Memorials

Mae Owens, sister of the late John Owens, sent a fine collection of old books that had been in the family for many years, some dating back to 1866.

These books were donated as a memorial to John Owens.

The Society will receive some Indian baskets and others items of historical interest from the family of the late Theresa Footman Denney.

Memorials are an excellent way to perpetuate the memory of those who have gone on.

* * * * *

Historical Society Exhibit

Our present exhibit in the Government Center consists of many items displaying the variety of articles we have. Of course

this is only a little of the many we have.
At the last count we had 2220 cataloged.
There are many, many more to process.

This exhibit was arranged by Roberta
Spotts and Marilyn Neely.

* * * * *

Don't Forget! 75th Anniversary!

The Madera County Board of Super-
visors has requested that the Historical
Society take the responsibility of com-
memorating this anniversary. You will be
hearing much more about this later on.
If you have ideas, send them in.

* * * * *

Membership

Our membership is reported as of
November 25, 1967:

399 Paid Members
30 Delinquent for 1967
429 Total on our Roster

* * * * *

Madera County Fair Booth

The Society had a booth at the Fair
this fall. It was arranged by Mr. and Mrs.
Cecil Neely. All of the items in the old
time kitchen belonged to the Society with
the exception of the stove. The Neelys
borrowed that from a Chowchilla secondhand
store. The exhibit was a popular gathering
place and as a result 41 members joined for
the first time. President Pyers arranged
for members to be in the booth at all times
during the Fair.

* * * * *

The Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will be held on
January 17th as our Constitution says we
must meet for our annual meeting on the
third Wednesday of January.

At this time we do not have the meeting
place but every member will be informed in
plenty of time.

As all of you know, at this meeting we
elect new officers and take up the general
business of the Society.

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